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New York

President:	Mr. Churkin/Mr. Iliichev	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Argentina	Mrs. Perceval
	Australia	Mr. Quinlan
	Chad	Mr. Cherif
	Chile	Mr. Gálvez
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Araud
	Jordan	Mr. Hmoud
	Lithuania	Mr. Baublys
	Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
	Nigeria	Mr. Laro
	Republic of Korea	Ms. Paik Ji-ah
	Rwanda	Mr. Nduhungirehe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Mr. Dunn

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the progress towards the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel (S/2014/397)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the progress towards the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel (S/2014/397)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Hiroute Guebre Sellassie, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2014/397, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the progress towards the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel.

I now give the floor to Ms. Sellassie.

Ms. Sellassie (*spoke in French*): I am honoured to brief the Security Council on the progress towards the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel. As the Council knows, I assumed my functions very recently, and I would like to take this opportunity to share my first impressions and some views on the future direction of the United Nations efforts in the Sahel region.

Since the endorsement of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel by the Council last year, the United Nations system in the region has jointly initiated a number of regional activities in the areas of governance, security and resilience, as outlined in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/397).

In the area of governance, we have given priority to activities that promote political inclusion and seek to build consensus among the population on the basis of national and regional priorities. We have also underscored capacity-building activities for the improved delivery of essential services. While continuing to focus on those important priorities, we need to do more to reach the people of the Sahel and to place them at the centre of efforts to address the challenges of governance.

In the area of security, we have initiated activities that seek to promote the common management of the borders and to prevent the spread of violent ideology through confidence-building and capacity-building measures. Those activities need to be scaled up, while more attention and resources must be paid to fighting youth unemployment.

In the area of resilience, we will continue to link humanitarian interventions and development activities, including by promoting legitimate cross-border economic activity.

(*spoke in English*)

In the short time that I have been in office, I have been struck by the deterioration of the political and security situation in the region, notably in Libya, the enduring political and security challenges in Mali, and the persistent terrorist attacks throughout the region, in particular those carried out by Boko Haram in Nigeria, all of which continue to have negative consequences on civilians and local economies. The humanitarian situation remains extremely fragile in 2014. At least 20 million people remain at risk of food insecurity and nearly 5 million children are at risk of acute malnutrition. Meanwhile, the high levels of youth unemployment in the Sahel increase the appeal of violent ideology.

As the Council is aware, the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy requires both the sustained political will of the Governments of the countries of the Sahel and, more broadly, a profound political, economic and social transformation in the region. One of the key lessons that we learned from the crisis in Mali is that democratization processes, which translate into internationally sanctioned elections and efforts towards decentralization, need to be complemented by efforts to strengthen State institutions and to better integrate and manage diverse societies. At every level, the quality of governance is crucial to creating an environment that effectively reduces the risk of identity-based conflict, the religious radicalization of society, the youth in particular, and their recruitment to terrorist groups or any kind of criminal network.

The formulation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel has raised very high expectations among the people of the region, requiring tangible benefits for the populations as quickly as possible. That is why, in implementing the integrated strategy, the United Nations system will prioritise the inclusion of

civil society, tribal and religious leaders, and research institutions.

The dramatic surge in the terrorist acts of Boko Haram in northern and central Nigeria since 2013 is now also threatening Cameroon, the Niger and Chad. Moreover, the conflict and state collapse in the Central African Republic have led to higher instability in Central Africa and thereby increased the risk of new connections between terrorist groups based in the Sahara/Sahel region, Nigeria, the Horn and East Africa. The reality on the ground is that North, West and Central Africa form a contiguous geopolitical region where short-term as well as mid- and long-term multidimensional responses to various threats to peace and security need to be implemented collectively.

That is why efforts to address security challenges in the Sahel within the framework of the United Nations strategy cannot ignore the interactions between core Sahel countries and North Africa or between core Sahel and other countries of West and Central Africa. Responding to the threats of insecurity in the Sahel in a sustainable manner requires a well-coordinated approach encompassing North, West and Central African countries and a flexible, issue-based, geographical definition of the borders of the Sahel region. The successful implementation of the strategy therefore requires that the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for West Africa and for Central Africa and the Special Envoy for the Sahel work closely together in diplomatic and political action, taking into account also United Nations political initiatives in North African countries, especially Libya.

In November 2013, the Ministers of the region established a coordination platform for the Sahel, entrusted with the overall coordination of the initiatives on the Sahel with a rotating chairmanship, currently held by Mali. The broad membership of the platform, from Cape Verde to the Sudan and from Cameroun to Tunisia, reflects the adoption of a flexible geographical definition of the region, which is necessary for the successful implementation of the strategy. It can also generate the much needed interregional cooperation I mentioned earlier, and improve relations among the countries concerned, beyond the boundaries of the individual economic communities.

Since its establishment, the members of the platform have met twice, endorsing the road map of the current chairmanship and agreeing to take concrete steps to improve coordination. Despite these efforts, the platform has faced challenges in promoting regional cooperation in the Sahel, largely due to the emergence of competing interventions and strategies that may delay progress towards long-term stability and development in the region.

Moving forward, it is important to support the rotating chairmanship in order to strengthen coordination and cooperation among all the concerned regional and international actors. This cannot be achieved by simply exchanging information. There is a need to leverage the comparative strengths of national Governments, subregional economic communities, the African Union and other concerned multilateral organizations and financial institutions in order to harmonize the multiple strategies.

I am fully committed to supporting the effective functioning of the platform. In this task, I have joined hands with the African Union High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, Mr. Pierre Buyoya. Within the framework of our respective mandates, he and I are co-chairing the technical secretariat, which is tasked to support the work and implement the decisions of the coordination platform, under the guidance of the rotating chairmanship.

Although the United Nations has significantly improved internal coordination and promoted a more coherent response, more needs to be done if the coordinated support of the international community is to effectively respond to the persisting challenges in the Sahel region. When the Secretary-General, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the President of the World Bank Group, the President of the African Development Bank and the European Commissioner for Development visited the region in November last year, they committed to breaking down institutional barriers and ensuring better targeted and coordinated support based on complementary areas of strength. I intend to honour that commitment as a matter of priority. If the international community does not improve coordination, then the limited resources that have been made available so far will not have the desired impact. Acting fast and in a coordinated manner is necessary to overcome the current pattern of recurrent crises and move towards a future of stability and development in the region.

My predecessor, Mr. Romano Prodi, oversaw the development of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, Mr. Said

Djinnit, has helped set up coordination mechanisms within the United Nations system for the effective implementation of the strategy. I will build on these important efforts, while continuing to consult with all concerned Member States and civil society, as well as regional and international partners for the successful implementation of the integrated strategy for the Sahel.

(*spoke in French*)

The countries of the region need assistance in laying the foundations of stability and sustainable development. Strengthening cooperation among national, regional and international partners is a precondition for the delivery of the needed assistance. The United Nations priority during the coming year will be to amplify joint action by harmonizing and aligning political, security, development and humanitarian efforts throughout the region. However, if we are to succeed, we will need the support and involvement of the Security Council in promoting joint action on the part of all actors working for the well-being of the peoples of the Sahel and, above all, the commitment and political will of the Governments of the countries of the region to undertake without further delay the structural reforms necessary to the prosperity of the region.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Ms. Sellassie for her briefing.

I now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Cherif (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Russian Federation for having organized this debate on the Sahel. I congratulate Ms. Hiroute Guebre Sellassie on her nomination as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel and thank her for her briefing. I also pay tribute to the former Special Envoy, Mr. Romano Prodi, for his tireless efforts, and commend the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa.

I welcome the fact that the Sahel region, which is one of the poorest in the world, has attracted the Security Council's attention. The region continues to face security, humanitarian, governance and development problems, as well as the damaging impact of drought and desertification. The presence of armed groups — including separatist, terrorist and criminal groups — and the proliferation of weapons and youth unemployment further complicate the already precarious situation.

Chad welcomes the efforts of regional and international organizations to find solutions to the region's problems. We especially appreciate the holding, in New York on 26 September 2013, of a high-level meeting on the situation in the region, as well as the high-level visit from 5 to 7 November 2013 to Mali, the Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad carried out by the Secretary-General along with the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, the President of the African Development Bank (ADB), the Commissioner of the European Union responsible for development and representatives of the World Bank. We also welcome the announcement of new investments in the region — totalling $6.75 billion from the European Union and $1.05 billion from the World Bank — to benefit the five countries of the region. I should like to make some observations on the three pillars of the strategy, namely, governance, security and resilience.

With regard to governance, I welcome the commendable initiatives by the United Nations system and its partners, including the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF, UNESCO and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, aimed at resolving the governance problems that exist in several of the countries of the region. Among other things, those efforts touch on the question of women, promoting social cohesion, preventing conflict, supporting Governments in order to improve access to basic services, creating jobs and income-generating activities, supporting efforts to assess the risks of vulnerability, birth registration, strengthening teaching, vocational and professional education facilities, and assistance to defence and human rights institutions, among other things.

With regard to security, the deployment of the African-led International Support Mission in Mali, followed by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), contributed greatly to stabilizing that country. Nevertheless, the restoration of the territorial integrity of the country continues to be a major challenge. The resumption of clashes between Malian forces and armed groups in Kidal on 19 May has seriously undermined a country that is already quite fragile. We wish to commend the joint efforts by the Chair of the African Union and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MINUSMA that led to the conclusion of a ceasefire agreement on 23 May. We would also like to welcome the Algiers talks among

the armed groups, which have made it possible to establish a platform for an inclusive dialogue with the Government.

However, the ever-increasing terrorist attacks, isolated incidents and the use of improvised explosive devices against both Malian and international forces are unacceptable and we resolutely condemn them. Last week's attack in Aguelhoc, in which four of Chad's soldiers serving in MINUSMA were killed and others were injured, serves to remind us that the terrorist threat has not been stemmed.

There are also enormous risks in Libya that the democratic transition could be reversed, in spite of the election of the Constituent Assembly last April and the progress made in the area of transitional justice. The country today is favoured territory for lawlessness and all sorts of criminal and terrorist activity.

The terrorist acts and kidnappings of children by Boko Haram in Nigeria are a further cause for concern. That group has access to sophisticated weapons and poses a growing threat to the region of Lake Chad and Central African through its exploitation of the porousness of the borders and the situation of unemployment and ignorance among young people.

As the report of the Secretary-General points out (S/2014/397), terrorist attacks in the Maghreb and the Sahel increased by 60 per cent in 2013 over the previous year, reaching a total of 230 incidents. This is worrying when it comes to survival of both people and public institutions. The United Nations, which has been working in the region since July 2013, should continue and step up its efforts. I wish to welcome the regional projects carried out by the Organization to foster security, in particular the efforts of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Counter-Terrorism Committee and the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force of the Department of Political Affairs.

Security is at the heart of development. The goal should be to wage a relentless war against jihadists, terrorists, criminals and traffickers. Particular emphasis must be placed on strengthening cooperation, especially with the Maghreb, by involving police, customs and education services, creating a regional and subregional database and stepping up information exchange.

Moreover, young people must be made aware of the true teachings of religion, so as to prevent radicalization and involvement in the ranks of terrorist and criminal groups. We must also provide solutions to the economic problems of youth. We must highlight to young people the crucial role of traditional and religious leaders in preventing and resolving conflict.

Security in and of itself is not enough; there must be a major campaign with regard to resilience, given the Sahel's acute development problems and its grave humanitarian difficulties. In spite of the efforts made by the countries of the region, at least 20 million people face the risk of food insecurity, with 4.1 million already in a critical stated, almost 5 million children threatened by acute malnutrition and more than 1.5 million refugees and displaced persons as a result of epidemics and natural disasters. I welcome the regional initiatives by all the agencies of the United Nations system aimed at strengthening the people's resiliency.

We ask that particular attention be focused on women by way of access to productive elements such as land, financing and credit, technology and so forth. Young people should also receive support in the areas of education and access to decent employment.

We are embittered at seeing the degradation of the environment as a result of climate change. We call for adaptation and mitigation measures, in particular through adaptation and the management of watersheds, including those in Chad and the Niger River, as well as by the implementation of the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative.

We must also encourage investment in herding communities and create avenues for development that can serve to settle people and improve their living conditions. In that regard, we call for support for national development programmes and regional initiatives, in particular those developed by the African Union and other institutions in the Sahel.

It is also crucial that we resolve the energy crisis in the Sahel by emphasizing investments and by exploiting the limitless potential of renewable energy, including solar, wind, geothermal and biomass.

All of that will require considerable financial resources, which should be provided through flexible disbursement procedures, so as to effectively support efforts in the Sahel. In that regard, we hope that the Sahel Action Fund being put in place at the ADB will bring substantial added value for the implementation of the projects identified.

We also count on the support of the World Bank, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and all other bilateral and multilateral partners to provide ongoing financial and technical support to the countries of the region, especially the five countries singled out in the Sahel strategy. We commend the putting in place of a coordination mechanism for the strategy. We welcome the fact that the ministerial coordination platform for the Sahel, currently led by Mali, provides a framework to consider the major problems in the region and to arrive at a common understanding on the initiatives and follow up the progress achieved.

We remain optimistic that close collaboration between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the High Representative of the African Union, as co-chairs of the technical secretariat for the coordination platform, will be strengthened with a view to coordinating and harmonizing initiatives.

We also welcome the development of an implementation plan for the strategy covering the period 2014 to 2016. We take note of the move of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General from Rome to Dakar on 1 January.

Chad also welcomes the drafting of various initiatives aimed at resolving the manifold and complex problems affecting the Sahel, including the African Union strategy for the Sahel, the European Union strategy for security and development in the Sahel, the joint Sahel programme of the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel and the IDB, the regional programme for the Sahel being developed by the World Bank, which is focused on resilience and the economic perspective, the Sahel strategy of the Economic Community of West African States and other relevant initiatives.

We hope that the strategy, given its evolving nature, will take on the main priorities of development as set forth in relevant national and regional development programmes. In that context, in order to better contribute to meeting the objectives set, Chad has already appointed a coordinator for each of the three objectives of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel. In that regard, we ask that a formal working group with the Permanent Missions in New York of the countries of the Sahel region to ensure follow-up in the development and implementation of initiatives.

In conclusion, we hope that pursuant resolution 68/247, section VI, para. 13, the title of the current Special Envoy be raised to the Deputy Secretary-General level to enhance the scope of the Office's action to match the level of the challenges to be met in the vast region of the Sahel.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel for her statement and wish to express to her, on behalf of France, our full support in carrying out her new mandate.

The crisis in Mali, which has marshalled a large part of our energy for more than a year, symbolizes to the extreme the fragility of the Sahel. What is the added value of the United Nations to help the Sahel countries to face those challenges? The United Nations strategy should respond by striving to attain three objectives.

First, the strategy must define a common transnational approach to all agencies. The approach should be transnational because the United Nations response to the problems of the Sahel with regard to humanitarian, security and development issues has long been segmented according to States. That does not make sense to respond to problems that are transnational in nature, be they issues of security or climate or related to the situation of nomadic peoples of the Sahel. Next, a common approach by all United Nations agencies is also essential in all areas. Terrorism feeds on governance and development problems. Conversely, security issues have a negative impact on economic growth of the States of the Sahel. Without security there is no development and without development there is also no security.

I commend the United Nations on those two aspects for the work it has accomplished in the last two years under the coordination of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa. His work has provided a good foundation for a regional and integrated approach by the United Nations.

Secondly, the United Nations should help all stakeholders to coordinate their efforts for the Sahel. A good example in that regard is the Malian crisis. The coordination among all international actors is not obvious. Yet it is essential if the parameters of a lasting peace in Mali are to be defined. The United Nations and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) have a key role to play in that process, as the Security Council has pointed out.

Across the Sahel, many initiatives and forums bring together the countries of the region in different

configurations — the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union, "countries of the field" and the Group of Five for the Sahel, among others. In addition, international partners have developed their own approach to the Sahel; for example, the European Union has its own strategy for the Sahel, as do the African Union, ECOWAS, and the World Bank, with its Sahel initiative. We must ensure that those multiple initiatives are coordinated in an efficient manner. In that context, the United Nations and the Special Envoy can play a role of good offices to bring together the regional and international efforts in the Sahel.

In that context, the coordination platform for the integrated strategy in the Sahel, implemented on the occasion of the visit of the Secretary-General to the Sahel in November 2013, is a unique framework. It is being chaired by Mali for two years, and the United Nations and the African Union provide the secretariat. The platform is the only forum that brings together all the countries of West Africa and the Maghreb, as well as the international and regional organizations concerned.

Thirdly and most important, the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel must lead to concrete projects in all areas. In the area of governance, the next year will be marked by a large number of elections in the Sahel and West Africa, which are all tests for the robustness of these States. The task of the United Nations is to assist States wanting such assistance in organizing the deadlines in a transparent and credible manner.

In the area of security, the Secretary-General recalls that the terrorist attacks in the Maghreb and Sahel grew by 60 per cent in 2013 compared to 2012, which includes 230 incidents throughout the region. As members of the Council know, France is very involved in helping the countries of the region. We intervened directly at the request of the Malian authorities and in support of our African partners. The Elysée Summit for Peace and Security in Africa in December 2013 provided an opportunity for African countries to intensify their cooperation in order to strengthen their security capabilities and their ability to respond to crises. For its part, the United Nations can contribute to that effort.

In the humanitarian and development areas, extreme poverty is a root cause of problems in the Sahel. That is compounded by a fast-growing population, which weighs on the development of those countries. In 2014, the number of people suffering from food insecurity in the region is estimated to be over 20 million. Five million children are threatened by a risk of serious malnutrition. The development of desert areas should be a major focus of our efforts, in support of pastoralism and the development of infrastructure to open up those spaces. We welcome the commitment of international partners in that area.

The decision of Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in February in Rome to launch a consolidated appeal for the Sahel for $2 billion over three years is innovative. It is the first time that a multiannual approach has been adopted. It adds to the major commitments of the World Bank and the European Union. France, the largest bilateral donor in the region, has also decided to increase its commitment to €900 million for the period 2014 to 2015.

In conclusion, I would like to call for the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel not to be just another theoretical document, disconnected from reality. The problems plaguing the Sahel are too serious for us to let that happen. The United Nations strategy must be genuinely at the service of the States and peoples of the Sahel and should lead to practical solutions.

Mr. Gasana (Rwanda): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing today's briefing on the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel. I congratulate Ms. Hiroute Guebre Sellassie on her recent appointment as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel and thank her for her briefing. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the former Special Envoy, Mr. Romano Prodi, for his work and contribution in the launching and initial implementation of the strategy for the Sahel.

Since the last briefing on the strategy, the regional security and humanitarian landscape have continued to be of concern. Porous borders and weak State structures throughout the region, compounded by specific challenges in Libya and Mali, and the increasing activities of Boko Haram in Nigeria, especially along the borders with Chad and Cameroon, provide an enabling environment for increased illicit activities and potential instability in the subregion. Although several initiatives and meetings have taken place, the pace of implementation of concrete projects aimed at addressing the root causes of conflicts and creating resilience in the populations of the region needs to be accelerated. In the same vein, we would like to

emphasize the importance of ownership, political will and trust among Governments of the region, which are critical for the success of those initiatives. In that regard, the development of the 2014-2016 implementation plan of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel is encouraging. Allow me to make a few comments on some of the pillars of that strategy.

On governance, we welcome activities that were undertaken to address challenges related to women's participation in the political process, the promotion of social cohesion and job creation and income-generating activities, with a focus on youth. In addition, we would like to stress that strengthening the capacity of the countries of the region to ensure the effectiveness of the State authority will enable regional States to protect populations and borders. In that regard, there is a need to associate and coordinate with different regional actors, such as the Economic Community of West African States, Maghreb countries, the African Union (AU) and United Nations agencies.

On resilience and the humanitarian situation, we are pleased to note the development of the strategic response plan for 2014-2016. The region is facing chronic humanitarian needs, with more than 20 million people in need, including refugees and internally displaced persons. Unfortunately, the response to those needs has been below expectations. We call on partners, especially the financial partners, such as the European Union, World Bank and the African Development Bank, to honour their pledges by supporting enabling projects for the people of the region. It is also important that countries of the Sahel region, as well as the whole African continent, improve the management of natural resources in order to move towards self-resilience and long-term sovereignty.

On security, the scourge of terrorism and extremism has not spared the Sahel region, with unprecedented security and humanitarian consequences. There is a need for a regional response to a regional threat, as demonstrated by the increased terrorism in the region and in Libya and northern Mali. Terrorism is increasingly becoming interconnected throughout Africa — from Boko Haram in Nigeria, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb and Ansar Dine in Mali, and Ansar Al-Sharia in Libya to Al-Shabaab in Somalia, and from the Maghreb to East Africa and the Horn through West Africa, with links to Syria, Yemen and other parts of the world. This is a worrying situation, threatening the African and world stability. We need now to have proactive policies and mechanisms and concrete measures to prevent the proliferation of those negative groups. Those measures can succeed only if the United Nations works hand in hand with the regional and subregional organizations to enhance and sustain innovative mechanisms aimed at foreseeing and preventing terrorist activities instead of managing their deadly consequences.

Rwanda would like to stress that security should be one of the key priorities of the Sahel strategy, with a focus on enhancing cross-border cooperation and building capacity for better border control and management. At the same time, we would like to encourage regional initiatives to enhance security cooperation in the Sahel in order to combat terrorism, transnational crime, and arms and drug trafficking more effectively. In that regard, Rwanda welcomes the holding of the meeting organized by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate in Nouakchott in May 2014.

In conclusion, Rwanda commends the important work done by the Secretary-General and his Special Envoys in coordinating initiatives with the African Union, represented by President Pierre Buyoya, AU High Representative for Mali and the Sahel; the World Bank; the African Development Bank and other interlocutors in the region, with a view to giving momentum to the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel. We pledge our continued support for those activities and call on Governments of the region to fully utilize the demonstrated international will to support the Sahel region.

Ms. Paik Ji-ah (Republic of Korea): I congratulate Ms. Hiroute Sellassie on her appointment as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel. I also thank her for her briefings on the progress in the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel.

The Sahel region, which stretches across an extensive transitional area of Africa, has faced many complex and interconnected challenges. The region remains vulnerable and susceptible to food insecurity, terrorism and drug and arms trafficking, among others. In particular, the security challenges in Libya, the recent violent clashes in northern Mali and terrorist attacks by Boko Haram in Nigeria have had a negative impact on the civilian and local economies of the Sahel region.

As such, the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, which encompasses the three sectors of governance, security and resilience, serves as an invaluable framework to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated approach to addressing such multifaceted challenges. We believe that the full and timely implementation of the strategy is of utmost importance. In that vein, I would like to touch upon three points regarding the implementation of the strategy.

First, it is important to strengthen the long-term capacity of the Governments in the Sahel region through the United Nations strategy. Capacity-building can also foster the political will and national ownership of the Governments concerned. In particular, given the seriousness of the security challenges surrounding the porous borders of the Sahel region, capacity-building for border control, counter-terrorism, combating transnational organized crime, and preventing violent extremism needs to be urgently implemented.

Another element required is ensuring overall coherence and complementarity. Taking into account the various regional initiatives for the Sahel, it is imperative to have an effective coordination and coherence mechanism. The regional organizations, based on their comparative advantages, should seek to create synergies with other initiatives in order to maximize the effectiveness of assistance and avoid the duplication of effort. In that regard, we note that the second meeting of the ministerial coordination platform on strategies for the Sahel, which was held in Bamako on 16 May, we called for the continued coordination and priority setting through such mechanisms.

Finally, more focus should be placed on women and young people, who are the potential driving force for the development of the Sahel region. Women play a key role in food production in the Sahel and often show resilience to natural and economic shocks. Moreover, unemployed young people are taken advantage of by terrorist and extremist groups under circumstances of poverty and food insecurity. Ensuring their participation in the political process and empowering them through assistance and support would greatly contribute to the promotion of governance, security and resilience in the Sahel region.

It is essential that the international community maintain its engagement and commitment to the Sahel. The Republic of Korea is committed to supporting those efforts to promote peace, stability and development in the region.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): Like others, we welcome Ms. Guebre Sellassie to her first Council briefing as Special Envoy.

Today's meeting is important in maintaining the spotlight on the ongoing humanitarian, governance and security challenges in the Sahel region and on the United Nations response. As we have been warned time and again, we cannot forget the Sahel or we will face more crises like the one experienced in Mali.

Recent developments are very worrying. They include clashes between the Government and armed groups in northern Mali, the deteriorating security situation in Libya, and the increasing impact of Boko Haram. Civilians across the region face the persistent threat of violence and food insecurity. Terrorism and organized crime are harming legitimate economic opportunities, undermining Government capabilities and creating political instability. That in turn is allowing armed groups to expand their influence. There are new flows of refugees and internally displaced people.

As we know, just as the problems transcend borders, so too must their solutions. The United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel provides a truly cross-regional platform to address those challenges. The focus must now be on the implementation of all three pillars of the strategy — governance, security and resilience — prioritizing the highest impact activities. I will focus on three issues.

First, we must look at coordination. The Sahel strategy is a tool for coordination, both within the United Nations and more broadly, internationally. It should assist in promoting coherence of the actions of regional and international actors so that time and resources are not wasted. We are encouraged by the growing leadership from the region, including through the ministerial coordination platform, which met in Bamako in May. We welcome United Nations and African Union support for the platform. We also note the establishment of the Group of Five for the Sahel to facilitate coordination among Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger. Complementarity and the synchronization of those initiatives will obviously be vital.

Secondly, we must deal with terrorism. Africa, as we know, has become a central theatre in the fight against terrorism. The evolving nature of the Al-Qaida network poses particular threats to the Sahel region, where terrorist attacks increased last year by an

alarming 60 per cent — the highest level in the past 12 years. Al-Qaida affiliates in the Sahel exploit local conflicts. Their leadership is younger, more prone to brutal violence and less responsive to community leaders, and they are more independently resourced, raising money through the taking of territory, organized crime and kidnapping for ransom.

Tackling the terrorist threat requires measured security and law enforcement approaches coupled with community-based action to counter violent extremism. Regional Governments need to diminish the appeal of terrorism to vulnerable populations, especially youth, who are at particular risk of radicalization and who form the largest demographic constituency in the region.

Countering violent extremism is complex, but it is more relevant than ever in preventing terrorism and conflict. We welcome the Secretary-General's increased focus on the issue and the priority the Regional Working Group on Security has given it. That policy leadership now needs to be followed by concrete activities. Strengthening engagement between the Department of Political Affairs, the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate will continue to be important, and we urge the United Nations to leverage the full range of development and security entities to build community resilience against terrorism.

The Council has a specific instrument to tackle the Al-Qaida threat — namely, the Al-Qaida sanctions regime. However, its effectiveness depends upon the ability of affected States to use the regime as part of their national and regional counter-terrorism strategies. We need to do more to empower and encourage the countries of the Sahel to do so. As Chair of the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) concerning Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, we have worked to improve collaboration with regional authorities to identify individuals and entities who should be targeted by the regime.

Finally, on resilience, which is the third pillar of the strategy, over 20 million people in the Sahel — a number equal to the population of Australia — are threatened by food insecurity, including 5 million children facing acute malnutrition. An entire generation is at risk. As the number of people confronting food insecurity, weather extremes, instability and violence grows, the need for a comprehensive approach to preventing and addressing those threats is self-evident. We welcome the efforts to date of the Regional Working Group on Resilience towards promoting systemic change on resilience.

We are pleased that the humanitarian community's three-year strategic response plan for the Sahel is well aligned with the Regional Working Group's efforts. We encourage the international community to continue support in line with that strategic approach. Australia's humanitarian assistance to the Sahel region, which amounted to over $60 million in the past year, has aimed to bridge the gap between humanitarian relief and development by building community resilience and addressing the root causes of chronic malnutrition.

In conclusion, we are confident we have the tool, in the integrated strategy, to help address the region's interconnected challenges in an integrated way. The focus, self-evidently, must now be on concrete initiatives. We look forward to the release of the 2014-2016 implementation plan very soon, and we wish the Special Envoy well in her work and stand very ready to support her.

Mr. Gálvez (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/397) on progress towards the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, presented by his Special Envoy, Ms. Guebre Sellasie. We take this opportunity to congratulate her on her appointment and to recognize the work done by her predecessor, Mr. Romano Prodi.

The report describes the initiatives taken and progress made in implementation of the governance, security and resilience pillars laid out in the integrated strategy for the Sahel, while recognizing the complex challenges and tasks that must be faced to make progress in terms of peace and stability in the region. We note the regional initiatives and the meetings and programmes hosted by the United Nations through its agencies and other members of the international community. They illustrate the importance attached to the situation in the region and the urgency of making progress towards concrete results.

My delegation believes special attention should be paid to strengthening the rule of law and its institutions and engaging in cooperation to that end. We appreciate the series of meetings held under the theme of the first strategic objective, namely governance, particularly considering that a large number of countries will have elections in the coming two years and they will need to be credible, transparent and clean. In that regard, we would like to highlight the importance of ensuring

the full and effective participation of women in those electoral processes from their earliest stages and, in general, in the public political arena and the economic sector. We acknowledge the efforts and work that the United Nations Office for West Africa, UN-Women and the Economic Community of West African States are carrying out in this area.

In relation to the second objective, which is security, the region now faces a complex and difficult situation. The report describes the events in Mali and Libya and the activities of terrorist groups in the region. The uncertainty facing the region due to transnational crime, the activities of extremist groups, trafficking in arms and drugs and environmental issues, among other challenges, continues to hamper progress and requires a swift and appropriate response.

There was a 60 per cent increase in terrorist attacks in the Sahel and the Maghreb between 2012 and 2013 and an increase in the presence of extremist groups and jihadists. Enhanced efforts are therefore needed so that the countries of the region, with the support of the international community, can proceed to establish mechanisms or instruments that enable them to respond to those threats. Only a coordinated response in which there is a fluid exchange of information between national entities will allow them to confront those scourges. We welcome, in that respect, the first meeting of officials from the police, customs and intelligence services who are responsible for border control in 11 countries of the Sahel and Maghreb.

In terms of resilience, the humanitarian situation in the region is fragile, and the numbers in the report are troubling. Twenty million people at risk of food insecurity, 5 million children at risk of malnutrition and over 1.5 million displaced are alarming figures. We hope that the development for the first time of a three-year plan with a view to providing a comprehensive multisectoral response and generating stronger partnerships between the humanitarian community and the development community will respond to those pressing needs. We hope to have more background on the development and implementation of that plan.

At a time when there is talk of donor fatigue, it seems necessary to not only rethink mechanisms to respond to emergencies, but to be generating mechanisms or partnerships to make progress in the region's development. Failure to respond adequately to these situations is to risk allowing criminals and extremist organizations to use precisely such conditions to capture and recruit vulnerable groups, in particular youth.

We take note of the various initiatives and mechanisms adopted in order to make progress on implementing the integrated strategy for the Sahel. We stress the importance of all such initiatives and mechanisms being properly coordinated and maintained over time and, in particular, responding to priorities determined by the countries themselves. Such an approach in which, alongside national ownership, the link between the rule of law, security and development will be recognized, will allow for the complex situation in the region to be adequately addressed.

Mr. Hmoud (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, Ms. Hiroute Guebre Sellassie, for her valuable briefing, which complemented the report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/397) on the progress towards the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel.

Despite the major challenges facing the region caused by the long years of civil conflict, the persistent efforts of the international community, the United Nations and its entities, stakeholders and regional organizations have yielded some progress. Jordan affirms the close link and interdependence among the strategy's three pillars of governance, security and resilience. In that context, we emphasize the following main points.

First, while the countries of the Sahel may urgently require sustained efforts to integrate correct governance principles and build governance structures after years of civil conflict, that process must be based on a stable security situation. It is well known that the security challenge in the Sahel region is not limited to containing or ending civil conflict. It requires further efforts to deal with the trafficking of small arms, illicit drugs, valuable resources and livestock. Obviously, the financial windfalls of such operations may be used to finance the terrorist activities of extremist organizations inside and beyond the region, given the very close linkages between organized crime and terrorism, especially the pervasive corruption and weak State control of the borders.

Secondly, Jordan has repeatedly affirmed the need to focus on partnership and inclusiveness of all groupings — including the religious, ethnic and political sectors — in efforts to restore stability and

rebuild State institutions in the Sahel. Alienation and marginalization policies have led to growing outrage on the part of some groups, thereby broadening social divisions that have led to increased civil strife based on religious, ethnic and tribal factors that have proved extremely difficult to overcome in the recovery period. As witnessed recently, extremist groups have exploited civil conflicts in various regions of the African continent so as to broaden their influence and win the sympathy of sectors of society that have provided them with an enabling environment that has allowed them to penetrate national security agencies and target the international presence.

Thirdly, addressing the difficult humanitarian situation faced by certain countries of the Sahel requires concerted national and international action and persistent efforts to lessen the humanitarian suffering resulting from that situation. In that context, Jordan affirms the need for efficient burden-sharing among national and international parties based on each party's competencies and comparative advantage. We must also work diligently to achieve economic development and create employment opportunities, especially for the young, and provide incentives for migrating capital to return to the homeland, as an important part of the effort to attract investment, while focusing on education as a long-term investment to ensure stability. It is also important to strengthen and rebuild judicial institutions to ensure the entrenching of the rule of law.

Finally, the coordinated efforts of national and international stakeholders and regional organizations to implement the strategy require continued monitoring and evaluation, in view of possible changes in the field that may, in turn, require adjusting some elements of the strategy. We also reaffirm the importance of accurately measuring the impact of efforts to implement the strategy in the field and to redirect financial and human resources to achieve the desired outcome most efficiently.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I thank Russia for organizing this meeting on the Sahel under its presidency of the Security Council. My thanks also go to the new Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, Ms. Guebre Sellassie, for her introduction of the report of the Secretary-General on the progress achieved in implementing the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel (S/2014/397). The report rightly highlights the importance to the international community of taking a coordinated approach to strengthening governance, security, resilience and development in the Sahel region.

Since the beginning of the year, the security situation has deteriorated in northern Mali, Libya and around Lake Chad. We have witnessed an increasing number of violent actions on the part of the terrorist group Boko Haram, and human rights violations and attacks on civilians and members of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, perpetrated by Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, the Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest, Ansar Dine and Al-Mourabitoune. Those terrorist groups and the criminal networks proliferating throughout the region represent cross-border threats to peace and security that undermine States' authority and hamper development opportunities.

No State is capable of countering the threat alone; strengthened regional cooperation and the support of the international community are needed. Recent activities of the Group of Five for the Sahel — the new regional group comprising Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger— the ongoing efforts of the Economic Community of West African States and the continuing Nouakchott process initiated by the African Union amply illustrate the readiness of countries in the region to strengthen cooperation in security matters.

Beyond security, it is important that the Sahel States make sustained efforts, with the support of the international community, to find lasting solutions to the root causes of instability in the region that have allowed criminal networks and terrorist groups to thrive. We must respond to the structural humanitarian crisis — particularly food security — and support sustainable and inclusive socioeconomic development that creates jobs and ensures basic social services and the development of agriculture and infrastructure, based on lessons learned. Particular attention should be focused on border areas and on the infrastructure that facilitates regional integration. That will further improve territorial control and strengthen States' authority over their territory.

In addition, strengthening democracy, establishing Government infrastructure conducive to development, fighting corruption, promoting and protecting human rights, as well as reconciliation and decentralization, should in our view be at the heart of the action for peace and security in the Sahel. Indeed, resilient democratic institutions are a bulwark against violent radicalization and the emergence of national and regional conflicts.

Today we are witnessing a proliferation of initiatives and international coordination frameworks that reflects the difficulty of developing a common approach to solving the multiple crises that affect the Sahel. Faced with that proliferation, a pragmatic approach is needed. In that context, we believe that the key role should be played by the coordination platform for Sahel strategies, whose chairmanship will be held by Mali from 2013 to 2015. That platform, which was established during the joint visit to the region by the Secretary-General and the President of the World Bank last November, has the advantage of bringing together around the same table all the players of the region and their partners, which of course include the European Union. It responds to the need for national and regional ownership and is backed up by a technical secretariat.

We would like to take the opportunity this meeting offers to encourage the United Nations system as a whole, along with all the relevant players, to strengthen in a coordinated way their regional added-value programmes in accord with the road map adopted during the second ministerial meeting of the platform for the coordination of strategies for the Sahel, which was held on 16 May in Bamako.

For our part, through our bilateral and regional cooperation programmes, our contributions to the involvement of the European Union and regional actors and as a new member, since last month, of the African Development Bank, Luxembourg is determined to continue working to strengthen the partnership and the solidarity between the international community and the countries of the Sahel region.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): I thank Special Envoy Hiroute Guebre Sellassie for her briefing and take this opportunity to welcome her to her new role. I also want to thank the Secretary-General's Special Representative for West Africa, Said Djinnit, for his work over recent months to begin the implementation of the integrated strategy.

Recent developments again underscored the deep inter-connections between States in the Sahel region. Events in northern Mali in May affected not only Mali itself but the wider region, and the barbaric attacks of Boko Haram in northern Nigeria damaged not only the prosperity and security of Nigeria but also that of its immediate neighbours. To address the threat of Boko Haram, the British Foreign Secretary hosted a meeting on 12 June, in London, to further boost regional cooperation against Boko Haram. Representatives from Nigeria and other countries of the region, the African Union, the United Nations and the European Union attended that meeting, following the Paris summit of 17 May. Participants at the meeting highlighted that the issue of Boko Haram spreads further than Nigeria's borders. They agreed to law enforcement, military and intelligence cooperation to help combat the terrorist threat, and they stressed that security and stability could be achieved only through respect for human rights, alleviating poverty, creating jobs, strengthening the rule of law and building accountable governance.

The complexity and scope of the challenges in the region, taken with what is required to meet them, justify the adoption by the integrated strategy of a flexible definition of the broad Sahel-Sahara region. The broader view is right. It enables the United Nations and the wider international community to flex their responses across the region according to priority needs.

We fully support the integrated strategy's three-pillared approach to activity in the Sahel. All three pillars — governance, security and resilience — are linked. Without concerted progress across each of those agendas, it will be difficult to make lasting overall progress. The Secretary-General's latest report (S/2014/397) shows us that progress has been made in all three areas. It shows what can be achieved by mobilizing both multilateral organizations and the States of the Sahel region. One year into the strategy's implementation phase, more still needs to be done.

First, in the immediate term, with the onset of the annual lean season, the international community must be ready to alleviate the hardship of food insecurity. As the representative of France already pointed out, an estimated 20 million people will endure the pains of food insecurity this year: that is one in eight across the region. The United Kingdom, through its continued commitment to provide 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product for development assistance, stands ready to do our part.

Secondly, looking ahead, we must help Sahel States to manage their porous borders more efficiently and enable them to deliver core services such as health, education and justice. The United Kingdom will continue to work with its partners, including the European Union, to help achieve that.

Thirdly, as the Secretary-General's report notes, we should also encourage the development of the Group of Five for the Sahel, and we should encourage those five

countries to enhance their cooperation across a broad regional agenda, including economic cooperation.

The Secretary-General's report calls for an increased level of coordination to make our efforts as effective as possible. The United Kingdom agrees with that conclusion and will support the Special Envoy for the Sahel as she leads the implementation of the integrated strategy and seeks to strengthen governance, resilience and security across the Sahel.

Ms. Perceval (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. I also thank Ms. Hiroute Guebre Sellassie, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Sahel, for her briefing. We welcome her following her recent appointment to a post of such enormous responsibility. Argentina believes that her responsibility is enormous, because that is how we see it here in the Council and throughout the United Nations. The Sahel is one of the areas with the lowest human development indices in the world. The Sahel continues to suffer from enormous shortcomings and it must face longstanding injustices and new threats, such as environmental degradation, to mention only one among so many others. As we see with the conflicts in the Sudan, Libya and Mali, we have not been able to provide a response to the underlying causes of those conflicts, nor to the numerous illegal networks, nor to the threats represented by the various extremist and terrorist groups operating in the region.

However, Argentina has expressed on other occasions that religious beliefs in and of themselves are not the cause of conflicts. There is no religious belief or holy text that is based on hate and that promotes the destruction of peace. That does not exist in any religious belief. What we have in these cases is a mediocre level of politicization on the part of some who hold certain religious beliefs that they contrast with others, creating contradictions and incompatibilities. By the same token, poverty and inequality are not in and of themselves a threat to security; rather, they are a challenge for sustainable human development. But we also know that vulnerable, impoverished people who face discrimination and exclusion, in the absence of jobs, education and social cohesion, are used as tools by extremist and terrorist groups and by transnational criminal networks in order to make them look less like outcasts.

The Security Council should not be surprised to learn that young men and women are used by terrorist or extremist elements or by international organized crime, when the world is under the sway of economic models that encourage runaway consumerism, obscene gains and profits, in which the principle of solidarity is eroded the law of the jungle, and where financial markets, without ethics or law, define the future of peoples and States.

We cannot be surprised about such realities. That is why we are having this debate. And in the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, we have the challenge of dealing with the post-2015 and sustainable development goals. The Secretary-General's report (S/2014/397) does not state this specifically, but it clearly lays out those challenges.

When looking at specific conflicts in this region, Argentina has repeatedly emphasized the importance of keeping our eye firmly on the Sahel, underscoring the importance of having an integrated United Nations strategy that encompasses all the various aspects mentioned by my colleagues — security, governance, development, human rights and humanitarian issues. Therefore, when Mr. Prodi introduced the integrated strategy to us, we expressed our expectation that it would constitute an important step towards imposing greater coherence and effectiveness on the existing multitude of parallel and simultaneous national, regional and international programmes.

I do not wish to always be perceived as a voice of doubt and suspicion, but it is really very difficult to accept that if cooperation and coordination constitute an ethical and political decision aimed at cooperating with the Sahel region and enabling us to solve the extreme suffering there, this clearly indicates that failing to coordinate and to confront the obstacles is also a political decision. I would therefore say to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General that if there can be a policy of coordinating action, there can also be a policy that decides not to do so. We thus insist on the need for greater cohesion and effectiveness in the many regional, national and international programmes that the report describes.

We must hear and understand the struggles over who has real power in the Sahel and among external actors. A naive attitude and cosmetic changes will not help to improve security, democracy, the rule of law, development or human rights. We have to know what the dispute is about and who is disputing it. I also believe that it is very important that, instead of directing accusations at those who believe in whatever god, we should be looking at the women and children

who are living in poverty. Let us listen to and welcome the regional meetings where plans are being discussed for the challenges in the Sahel, such as the meeting on 16 May of the ministerial coordination platform for the Sahel, currently chaired by Mali, or the meeting on 16 February launching the Group of Five for the Sahel. These demonstrate the national ownership of the issue by the countries of the region, and we should listen to them in order to understand and thus to learn.

Finally, and briefly, I would like to note three issues that constitute a challenge for the region, as my delegation sees it. The first is that while primary responsibility for peace, security and development in the Sahel lies with the countries of the region, Argentina firmly believes in the importance of support from the international community and the United Nations, especially bearing in mind the other challenges that are also affecting the Sahel, such as climate change and the economic and financial crisis resulting from the actions of the richest countries in the world. We should also take into consideration the issues of financing for humanitarian assistance and that for 2014 the Sahel's humanitarian needs will reach $2 billion.

Secondly, many of the problems we are seeing are the result of deep-rooted causes that require meaningful solutions, not merely palliative ones. Saying that we are ready to eradicate poverty is not the same thing as being willing to reduce extreme poverty. We must affirm that we are willing to cooperate in recognizing and ensuring that women have full enjoyment of their human rights by helping them to become small business owners or parliamentarians, when constitutions change.

Lastly, for the Sahel, too, we must initiate profound change to tackle this crisis and modify the organization and structures of the global economic system so that its economic instruments can become tools that help human development rather than the other way around. We commend the progress that has been made in much of the region and on the African continent and the work of the regional and subregional organizations working on preventing conflict and on peacekeeping and peacebuilding, as well as in the areas of development and the protection and promotion of human rights.

I would like to point out that it would be helpful for the next report to include detailed information on the progress of th edisbursement of the $1.5 billion for new regional investments promised by the World Bank during the joint visit to the region in November 2013 by its President and the Secretary-General, which we believe was very important. Regarding all the programmes and funds mentioned in the report, we would like to have objective data on the financial totals dedicated to each of the strategic pillars in order to be able follow them up in detail.

There are many challenges, but Argentina is convinced that while the countries and peoples of the Sahel have a difficult road ahead of them, no country should have to despair. We take note of the comments of Chad, and we believe that the proposal for putting together a formal working group to include the representatives of the countries of the region here in New York is a very interesting idea.

Mr. Dunn (United States of America): I would like to begin by thanking the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for her briefing. We welcome Ms. Guebre Sellassie's taking on of this critically important post and look forward to working with her. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report and his leadership on this issue.

As we come together to discuss the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, it is worth noting that this entire initiative is built on the premise that the serious security challenges facing the Sahel are by definition regional. Whether we are speaking of groups carrying out attacks across borders, droughts leading to regional food insecurity or a humanitarian crisis in one country that displaces refugees to several others, we know that these problems are not confined to any one State, and their solutions cannot be either. In order to address such complex transnational problems effectively, we must come up with regional solutions and enlist a full range of actors in carrying them out, including Governments, multilateral and regional institutions, non-governmental organizations and civil society groups.

I would divide the challenges we face in the Sahel — and by "we" I mean all of us who care about the region and its people and who see its security and stability as tied to our own — into two categories. The first consists of emergencies and immediate crises, such as the current instability in Libya and the deteriorating situation in northern Mali, where we have seen renewed fighting. I would also include the growing threat posed by Boko Haram, because, while it was that group's brazen kidnapping of schoolgirls that captured international headlines — and let me be clear, the outrage their abduction has generated is fully justified — that was not an isolated attack. Indeed,

Boko Haram was attacking innocent civilians long before that incident, and since then it has continued to mount attacks with alarming regularity and increasing lethality. Just a few weeks ago, the group massacred scores of citizens along Nigeria's border with Cameroon. It is estimated that the group has killed more than 1,800 civilians this year alone.

There is a clear consensus that the deeds of those extremists, like the instability in Mali and Libya, must be met with a coordinated international response. That consensus was reflected in the ministerial meeting hosted last week by the Government of the United Kingdom, at which the Foreign Ministers of Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria, as well as representatives of the European Union, France, Canada, the United Nations, the African Union and my Government agreed upon a unified response to the crisis in Nigeria. That meeting produced concrete commitments from all of the participating countries — from beefing up the multinational joint task force to strengthening the sanctions against Boko Haram's leaders at the international and national levels to ensure that neither their militants nor their coffers find safe haven.

That consensus is reflected at the regional level, as well, in the ongoing work of the ministerial coordination platform, which brings together five Sahelian Governments to collaborate on security and development issues. That same consensus undergirds President Obama's announcement a few weeks ago of the Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund, which is aiming to work with allies and partners worldwide to respond to the evolving threat posed by violent extremism, including in the Sahel.

The second category of challenges in the Sahel consists of the longer-term chronic problems faced by the region, such as wide-spread environmental degradation, chronic food insecurity and the lack of opportunities for the region's young people. To cite one alarming statistic, at least 20 million people are at risk of food insecurity in the Sahel and nearly 5 million children are at risk of acute malnutrition. Those chronic long-term problems may seem less pressing on the surface, but left unaddressed, chronic problems become crises, and crises demand urgent and often more costly or risk-fraught responses. So if we know that youth under the age of 25 form the largest constituency in the Sahel and that they are the hardest hit by the growing unemployment in the region, and if we know that young people who have no opportunities are particularly vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment into extremist groups, then we must invest more in expanding opportunities for young men and women in the region.

I would like to offer a few recommendations as we continue to work together to address those challenges in the Sahel. While we are on the right track towards adopting a regional multilateral approach to those complex problems, we need to improve our coordination. That means being more mindful of avoiding overlap in prioritizing resouces to ensure that the ones we have provided are used in the most efficient and effective way possible.

Secondly, we must invest in prevention and we must invest in resilience. We need to do a better job of addressing the long-term chronic problems before they metastasize into urgent and large-scale crises. My Government is doing that right now through programmes like the Resilience in the Sahel-Enhanced (RISE) initiative. Announced in February by the United States Agency for International Development, its premise is simple. We invest in making the most vulnerable populations more resilient so they can bounce back when the inevitable crisis comes, whether it is a drought, flood or some other unforeseen but predictable disaster. The United States has dedicated $130 million to RISE over its first two years. The programme is already implementing a range of projects, such as promoting the cultivation of heartier crops in the Niger and working to reduce acute malnutrition in Burkina Faso.

We, the United Nations, have also been doing that through a number of smaller initiatives, like many of those mentioned by the Secretary-General in his report. In one of those initiatives in Mali, the United Nations Development Programme brought together 100 civil society groups to promote the involvement of women in the peace process and local-level dialogue. While programmes like that may not stop the fighting in Mali immediately, they can help empower communities to mitigate the violence and they can lay the foundations for building future peace.

I am convinced that if we can address those problems collectively and collaboratively, as if we are willing to not only react to the emergencies, but also to do more to anticipate them and to address their root causes, then we will be able to make the Sahel more peaceful and more prosperous, which is in all of our

interests. We are confident that the integrated strategy encapsulates those various elements.

Mr. Baublys (Lithuania): I thank Ms. Hiroute Guebre Sellassie, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, for the briefing on the progress towards the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel region. As this is the first briefing of Ms. Sellassie to the Council, allow me to congratulate her upon assuming that position and express our support for her leadership and engagement in tackling the challenges the Sahel region faces. I also wish to commend the United Nations Office for West Africa for its dedicated efforts in the Sahel region.

Throughout the reporting period, we witnessed the further deterioration of the political, security and humanitarian situation in the Sahel region, which results from the continuous erosion of State authority linked with humanitarian and development challenges, as well as the adverse effects of climate change. Weak governance, porous borders, illegal migration and arms trafficking, the phenomenal rise of terrorist activities — especially those carried out by Boko Haram and Al-Qaida-affiliated groups — and the lack of development opportunities need to be addressed to prevent the outbreak of crises, such as those we have recently witnessed in Libya, Mali and elsewhere. Enhanced cooperation and coordination among Sahel States are essential in order to prevent threats posed by terrorist groups, notably Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa, Ansar Eddine and Al-Mourabitoune, that cross borders and seek safe havens in the Sahel region and to combat the activities of those terrorist groups.

It is crucial to ensure that the elections in Libya be held without any delays and broad agreement on the future of the transition of the country is reached among all parties. Recent clashes in northern Mali demonstrated the urgency of making progress in the political dialogue. Further deadlock could have major security consequences for Mali and the wider region.

The security and political challenges in the Sahel continue to be triggered by the precarious humanitarian situation. As the Secretary-General's report (S/2014/397) states, despite good agricultural and pastoral seasons, at least 20 million people remain at risk of food insecurity and nearly 5 million children are at risk of acute malnutrition. Moreover, the people of the Sahel are extremely vulnerable to the environmental and economic shocks that strike the region frequently. As the Governments of the region have limited capacities to address the multifaceted, cross-cutting security, political and humanitarian challenges, coordinated international engagement is of utmost importance; yet the primary responsibility and ownership for fostering peace, security and development in the Sahel should be in the hands of the countries of the region.

We commend the United Nations engagement in addressing the challenges in the Sahel and support its leading role in coordinating international efforts. The Secretary-General led a visit to the region last November with representatives of the World Bank, the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and the European Union (EU) and conveyed a clear message of readiness and willingness of international actors to coordinate their efforts. Financial assistance provided by the EU and the World Bank, as well as other members of international community, provides a basis to turn commitments into actions on the ground.

We welcome the Sahel strategies and projects by the EU, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, as well as the establishment of the ministerial coordination platform and other regional initiatives. We also welcome the commitment of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, the Niger and Mali to deepening cooperation and establishing the Group of Five for the Sahel.

With many tools and initiatives aimed at addressing the root causes of the crisis in the Sahel, it is crucial to ensure their coherence and avoid duplication. We commend the conclusions of the high-level meeting, held in February 2014 in Brussels, recognizing that the coordination platform for the Sahel should constitute the overall coordination mechanism ensuring the synergies among the various strategies and approaches on the Sahel.

The United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel and its implementation plan are the right tool to ensure the cooperation and coordination of activities among various actors. We hope that the Group of Five for the Sahel will also get involved.

As the implementation plan, with a focus on governance, security and resilience, has been developed, it is now essential to ensure the coherence of activities on the ground and to deliver tangible results, thereby improving the living conditions of the people in the region. The Security Council should be regularly informed about achievements in the implementation of

the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel. Setting clear implementation benchmarks would be a useful tool for monitoring progress and for identifying issues that need the further attention of the international community.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China wishes to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened today's meeting. I also wish to thank Special Envoy Ms. Sellassie for her briefing.

The Sahel is a vast region with a large population and rich natural resources. In recent years, thanks to the ongoing efforts of the regional countries and the strong support of the international community, the overall situation in the Sahel region remains stable. Its economy continues to grow and there has been positive progress in the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel. China appreciates the active efforts of the United Nations, regional and subregional organizations in Africa, such as the African Union, and the relevant countries and bodies to improve the situation in the Sahel and to promote development in the region. China welcomes the good work of the newly appointed Special Envoy, Ms. Sellassie, for the implementation of the integrated strategy.

However, it must be acknowledged that the countries of the Sahel still face multifacted challenges, such as uneven development, growing ethnic tension, the spread of terrorism, the proliferation of illicit weapons and increased transnational organized crime. With regard to how to further improve the situation in the Sahel region and encourage the countries of the region to achieve lasting stability and development as soon as possible, I would like to underscore the following three points.

First, support for the efforts of the regional countries to maintain peace and stability is key to improving the security and humanitarian situation in the Sahel region. Currently, owing to an impasse in the political process and a turbulent security situation, some countries in the region face the threats of increasing terrorist activities, the proliferation of illicit weapons and the spread of transnational organized crime. Effectively dealing with such threats requires the unwavering efforts of the various countries to promote a political process for which they have ownership and to continuously strengthen capacity-building in the area of security. The international community should also strengthen coordination and cooperation so as to provide consistent and effective support to the countries in the region, promote mutual trust through dialogue and cooperation and maintain security and stability in the border areas through common efforts to combat the threats of terrorism and extremism.

Secondly, focusing on addressing the root causes of conflicts, such as poverty and underdevelopment, is the very foundation of lasting stability in the Sahel region. Building on the gradual strengthening, self-reliance and self-development of Sahelian countries, the international community and the international financial institutions should increase humanitarian assistance to the Sahel region, as well as technical support and investment to the countries in the region so as to help those countries to achieve social and economic development and to improve the livelihood of their people. China welcomes the World Bank, the African Development Bank and other financial institutions providing financial support to the Sahel region. We hope that the relevant pledges will be provided as soon as possible.

Thirdly, the international community should actively help the countries of the Sahel region strengthen capacity-building in the area of security through regional cooperation. In recent years, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States have actively promoted the development of a joint security mechanism and have committed themselves to dealing with African issues with an African approach, thus making good efforts to address the issues in the Sahel. The United Nations should fully utilize the role of the Sahel strategy as the coordination platform, coordinate the efforts of various parties and build synergy among various initiatives and strategies for the development of the region.

Finally, the Chinese Government attaches great importance to China-Africa relations and supports African countries in finding a development path appropriate to their national conditions. Through bilateral assistance and by participating in peacekeeping operations, China has supported the countries in the Sahel region in their efforts to achieve stability and development and has done its utmost to help African countries take leadership in addressing their issues, including the problems in the Sahel.

In future, China will continue to support African countries in strengthening capacity-building in the areas of peacekeeping and combating terrorism and piracy. We are ready to further strengthen cooperation

with the United Nations and regional organizations so as to play our part in an early and comprehensive resolution of the issues facing the Sahel region.

Mr. Laro (Nigeria): I thank Special Envoy Sellassie for her briefing and the Secretary-General for his report (S/2014/397).

The briefing that we have just heard and the Secretary-General's report indicate that considerable challenges remain for the Sahel in terms of the three pillars of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, namely, governance, security and resilience.

On governance, we note that more needs to be done by countries in the Sahel to foster greater inclusiveness in their political processes and to improve participation by marginalized groups, including women and young people. Experience shows that the exclusion of entire groups from political participation often generates tension that could cause instability and even conflict.

We also note from the Secretary-General's report that State and public security, national reforms, regional integration and economic development have all been negatively affected by fragile State institutions and weak border management in the Sahelian countries. Insecurity in border areas has affected governance at the local level and reduced the effectiveness of State authority over national territories. There is therefore a need to bolster State institutions and to strengten border management in order for progress to be made in improving governance in the region. One way to achieve better border management would be for contiguous States to collaborate effectively on border issues.

On security, we are concerned that the situation in the Sahel remains precarious. Multiple challenges, including political instability and the activities of organized criminal groups and terrorist organizations, such as Boko Haram and groups affiliated with Al-Qaida, as well as extremist armed groups, are significant contributing factors in that state of affairs. The situation has been compounded by porous borders across the region, which allow trafficking in arms and drugs and the virtual unimpeded movement of terrorists.

Such security challenges cannot be overcome by any one country acting alone. The cooperation of all countries of the region and, indeed, of the international community will be essential in order to achieve that. A good example of such cooperation can be seen in the establishment of the multinational joint task force by Chad, the Niger, Cameroon, Benin and Nigeria to carry out coordinated patrols of their common border areas in the fight against Boko Haram and other terrorist groups. The five countries have also created a regional intelligence fusion unit to strengthen intelligence cooperation on terrorism. We would like to acknowledge with gratitude the technical expertise that France, the United Kingdom, the United States, China and Canada are committing to support those and other initiatives in our efforts to fight Boko Haram. We also take this opportunity to thank all nations that have expressed support and good will to us as we confront the menace of Boko Haram.

With respect to resilience, we are deeply concerned about the extremely fragile humanitarian situation in the Sahel. The statistics in the Secretary-General's report paint a grim picture of 20 million people at risk of food insecurity, 5 million children at risk of malnutrition and over 1.5 million displaced. However, the report does not mention the efforts of national Governments and humanitarian actors to provide assistance to those in need. We believe that those efforts should be reflected in subsequent reports in order to allow for an appreciation by the Council of the degree to which the problem is being addressed, especially at the national level.

Experience shows that humanitarian crises can have security implications for the country concerned, as well as for neighbouring countries, if the situation is not carefully managed. We urge the United Nations and other humanitarian actors to pay close attention to the difficult humanitarian situation in the Sahel, with a view to alleviating the hardship faced by those affected by it.

In terms of the implementation of the integrated strategy, we welcome the progress made during the reporting period. We take particular note of the high-level meeting on the situation in the Sahel held on the margins of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly in September 2013, the high-level visit of the Secretary-General and other senior international officials to Mali, the Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad in November 2013, and the various activities of the former Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Romano Prodi. We pay tribute to Mr. Prodi for his service and efforts in support of the Sahel.

The establishment of a steering committee to provide strategic guidance, as well as three United Nations inter-agency working groups on governance, security

and resilience, is a significant step in the implementation of the integrated strategy. We take positive note of the close consultations the United Nations has been holding with other stakeholders, including the African Union (AU), the European Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), with a view to agreeing on common priorities and joint programming in the areas of governance and security. It is significant that the activities proposed by the United Nations will be implemented in collaboration with ECOWAS, the Economic Community of Central African States, the AU and other partners. That kind of cooperation is a win-win for all concerned, and we would like to see it strengthened.

To conclude, I would like to congratulate Special Envoy Sellassie on her appointment and assure her of Nigeria's full support for her and her Office.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the Russian Federation.

We support the considerations raised in the briefing made by Ms. Sellassie regarding the situation in the Sahelo-Saharan region. The Russian Federation position regarding the problems facing the region is consistent and unchanged — they require a comprehensive solution and the sustained attention of the international community.

We can see in the region the clear link between the need to establish a sound system of State governance, the search for appropriate responses to security-related challenges, and the provision of sustainable development, in parallel with overcoming significant humanitarian problems. In that respect, in our view, the load-bearing architecture of the integrated strategy, composed of three key pillars, has been well crafted, but more time will be needed to fine-tune this mechanism so that it can operate at full speed.

Significant steps have already been taken towards institutionalizing the formation of the implementation mechanism for the strategy and filling it with concrete content. We would refer first and foremost to the creation of the coordination platform for the Sahel at the ministerial level, whose role will be to become one of the strategy's pivotal components. We welcome the work of the Group of Five for the Sahel.

Those measures are important in bringing the States of the region together around a single platform and the elaboration of a common vision on how to eliminate the root causes of instability. However, positive administrative steps should in no case act as a substitute for real work. Regional initiatives should be backed by a broad spectrum of measures to be taken by the international community. The United Nations, unique in terms of its scope, is indispensable. We are pleased with the interest shown by the representatives of widely differing States and regions, including, of course, Russia. Global and regional financial institutions will be needed, too. There is no question, however, that the leading role in implementing the strategy should fall to the States of the Sahel themselves.

I should like to underscore one further essential issue. We must prevent any fragmentation of our efforts and the resulting dilution of resources. Coordination at all levels will be an important factor in the strategy's success. In that respect, I would be remiss not to recall the particular role played by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Office for West Africa.

We are seriously alarmed by the growing threat that the region may become a bridgehead for well-organized terrorism and criminal structures. In a vast, virtually lawless area where illicit weapons and drugs abound, one cannot but be concerned by the radical views taking root among the young. In such circumstances, it is especially important to agree on common approaches to combating transnational crime and to creating an appropriate legal framework.

It is quite clear that a powerful impetus to the growth of terrorist-related threats in the Sahel was provided by the turbulent and chaotic processes of the so-called Arab Spring. To be frank, on the basis of our observations at least, that term is being used increasingly infrequently. To put it mildly, its outcome is assuredly ambiguous. The chaos in Libya continues to spread well beyond its borders, and the conditions for a positive turning point have, unfortunately, been lacking to date.

The crisis in Mali was a serious challenge to the States of the region. We cannot speak of any sustained positive trends in that country. The whole broad perimeter of the Sahel is turbulent as well. However, and in conclusion, I wish to voice the hope that a constructive pooling of efforts at all levels under the aegis of the United Nations integrated strategy for the

Sahel will contribute to improving the situation and the quality of life of the people of the region.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at noon.